

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



3 1761 01563214 4

HELPS FOR STUDENTS OF HISTORY.



THE HISTORICAL CRITICISM OF DOCUMENTS

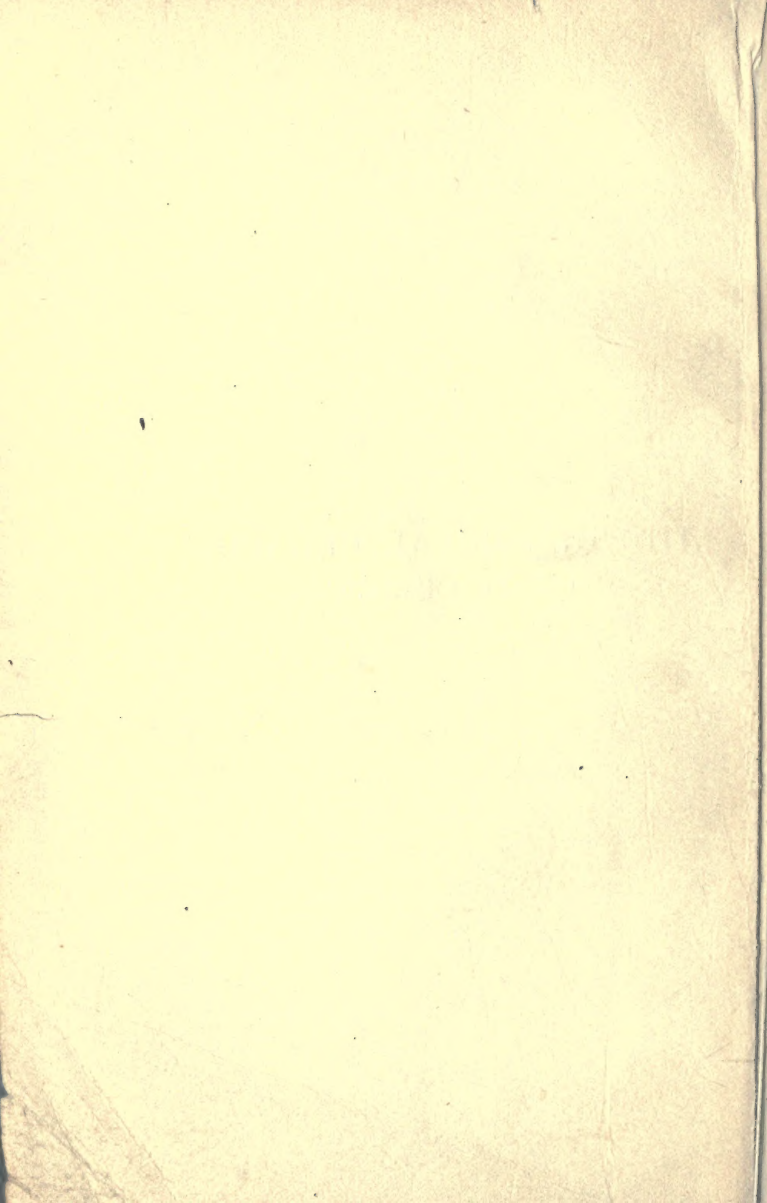
R. L. MARSHALL, M.A., LL.D.

HELPS FOR STUDENTS OF HISTORY.

1. **EPISCOPAL REGISTERS OF ENGLAND AND WALES.** By R. C. Fowler, B.A., F.S.A. 6d. net.
2. **MUNICIPAL RECORDS.** By F. J. C. Hearnshaw, M.A. 6d. net.
3. **MEDIEVAL RECKONINGS OF TIME.** By Reginald L. Poole, LL.D., Litt.D. 6d. net.
4. **THE PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE.** By Charles Johnson. 6d. net.
5. **THE CARE OF DOCUMENTS.** By Charles Johnson. 6d. net.
6. **THE LOGIC OF HISTORY.** By C. G. Crump. 8d. net.
7. **DOCUMENTS IN THE PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE, DUBLIN.** By R. H. Murray, Litt.D. 8d. net.
8. **THE FRENCH WARS OF RELIGION.** By Arthur A. Tilley, M.A. 6d. net.
By Sir A. W. WARD, Litt.D., F.B.A.,
9. **THE PERIOD OF CONGRESSES, I.** Introductory. 8d. net.
10. **THE PERIOD OF CONGRESSES, II.** Vienna and the Second Peace of Paris. 1s. net.
11. **THE PERIOD OF CONGRESSES, III.** Aix-la-Chapelle to Verona. 1s. net. (Nos. 9, 10, and 11 in one volume, cloth, 3s. 6d. net.)
12. **SECURITIES OF PEACE.** A Retrospect (1848-1914). Paper, 2s.; cloth, 3s. net.
13. **THE FRENCH RENAISSANCE.** By Arthur A. Tilley, M.A. 8d. net.
14. **HINTS ON THE STUDY OF ENGLISH ECONOMIC HISTORY.** By W. Cunningham, D.D., F.B.A., F.S.A. 8d. net.
15. **PARISH HISTORY AND RECORDS.** By A. Hamilton Thompson, M.A., F.S.A. 8d. net.
16. **AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF COLONIAL HISTORY.** By A. P. Newton, M.A., D.Litt., B.Sc. 6d. net.
17. **THE WANDERINGS AND HOMES OF MANUSCRIPTS.** By M. R. James, Litt.D., F.B.A. Paper cover, 2s.; cloth boards, 3s. net.
18. **ECCLESIASTICAL RECORDS.** By the Rev. Claude Jenkins, M.A., Librarian of Lambeth Palace. 1s. 9d. net.

[Continued on p. 3.]

**THE HISTORICAL CRITICISM
OF DOCUMENTS**



M3C97h
HELPS FOR STUDENTS OF HISTORY. No. 28

EDITED BY C. JOHNSON, M.A., H. W. V. TEMPERLEY, M.A.,
AND J. P. WHITNEY, D.D., D.C.L.

THE
HISTORICAL CRITICISM
OF DOCUMENTS

BY

Richard Lucas
R. L. MARSHALL, M.A., LL.D.

FELLOW OF THE ROYAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY
AND SOMETIME SENIOR SCHOLAR AND ASSISTANT LECTURER IN MODERN
HISTORY, QUEEN'S COLLEGE, GALWAY

168363.

6. 1. 22.

LONDON
SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING
CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE
NEW YORK: THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1920



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2008 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION - - - - -	7
II. EXTERNAL CRITICISM - - - - -	12
(A) GENUINENESS - - - - -	12
(B) LOCALIZATION - - - - -	27
(C) ANALYSIS OF SOURCE - - - - -	32
(D) THE RESTORATION OF THE ORIGINAL TEXT - - - - -	37
III. INTERNAL CRITICISM - - - - -	44
(A) DETERMINATION OF VALUE OF SOURCE - - - - -	44
(B) INTERPRETATION OF SOURCE - - - - -	48
(C) THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FACTS - - - - -	50
IV. DOCUMENTS NOT NARRATIVE - - - - -	55
V. SYNTHESIS AND EXPOSITION - - - - -	60
BIBLIOGRAPHY - - - - -	62

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE HISTORICAL CRITICISM OF DOCUMENTS

I.—INTRODUCTION

Ἀποφύγειν . . . νόσον ψυχῆς θάνατον, οὐ τὸν διαλύοντα
ψυχὴν ἀπὸ σώματος, ἀλλὰ τὸν διαλύοντα ψυχὴν ἀπὸ ἀληθείας.
—CLEM. ALEX.: *Stromateis*, Book ii., c. 7.

THE object of all historical work is to trace the development of the existing complex world-society from its disconnected beginnings down to the present day. But this task in its entirety is so manifestly beyond the power of any single student that in practice the work of the individual historian will be limited to some particular period or to some particular class of facts.

Now at the time of investigation this period or these facts belong already to the past, whether that past be of yesterday or of long-dead centuries. As a consequence the methods of direct observation and repeated experiment which are used so fruitfully and extensively in the natural sciences are wholly inapplicable. And so historical knowledge is essentially indirect. The biologist can start from the fact itself, observed directly. The chemist in his labora-

tory watches the actual process upon which he is occupied and repeats his experiment at will. But the starting-point of the historian is usually a document. This document embodies certain impressions which were once produced on the mind of an observer who is now inaccessible. It may have been written by a person who was incompetent, or careless, or one-sided, or it may have been produced so long after the events as to be untrustworthy. Therefore in order to derive genuine facts from a document numerous precautions are indispensable, and the historian's path to truth is beset by so many obstacles and pitfalls that to escape these requires an exact conception of the best means to the end in view. Thus the necessity and importance of a correct method is obvious. And it is with the method of investigation which is most likely to be fruitful and trustworthy in its results that this brief sketch is occupied.

The object of criticism is to discover what in a document may be accepted as true. The first question, therefore, which the historian asks is with regard to the genuineness of the source. This being settled, he strives to establish the place and time of its origin and the identity of its author. He will then analyze it, distinguishing carefully between those facts which the witness knew at first hand and those which he derived from others. And, because most sources do not exist in their original form as they left their writers' hands, it will be the duty of the student to restore as far as possible the original text, thus excluding the corruptions of copyists. With the restoration of the original text the work of what is known as

“External Criticism” is complete. It remains by means of “Internal Criticism” to decide the value of the evidence contained in the source, to interpret the latter, and by means of this evidence establish the historical facts of which we are in search. These facts are then grouped, gaps are filled in by constructive reasoning, and the whole is presented in such a form as to render intelligible the process and facts of historical development.

But before considering in detail the principles governing the use and interpretation of documents it is necessary to deal briefly with the question of their discovery. It is evident that the student's first questions as he approaches a period are, “Are there any sources? Where are they? What are they?” It is the work of bibliography to answer these. But sometimes bibliography will fail him. Certain periods have been thoroughly investigated, while others still remain to a considerable extent unexplored. Some of the bibliographies already published are wanting in completeness and are unscientific in their classification of material. But notwithstanding all this much valuable work has already been done, and bibliographical aids are as a rule many and invaluable.*

* See, in this series, *The Public Record Office*, by C. Johnson, M.A.; *Municipal Records*, by F. J. C. Hearnshaw, M.A.; *Documents in the Public Record Office, Dublin*, by R. H. Murray, Litt.D., etc. A good general handbook upon historical bibliography is that of Ch.-V. Langlois, *Manuel de bibliographie historique* (Paris, 1901-1904). In their *Introduction to the Study of English History*, by S. R. Gardiner, M.A., and J. Bass Mullinger, M.A. (London, 1903), a list of *printed* authorities is given in chronological order. For the earlier period of English history C. Gross's *Sources* (1915) is indispensable, and his bibliography of English municipal history is also valuable.

Then, having found his source or sources, there are certain auxiliary sciences, a knowledge of which is demanded according to the nature of the subject of investigation. Thus the student must be able to read the source, and this requires a knowledge of the language in which it is written. It is evident, *e.g.*, that, in order to investigate the history of ancient Assyria, it is necessary to be able to decipher cuneiform inscriptions. Again, in dealing with charters and diplomas a body of ascertained results calculated to assist in their criticism is already in existence, and a knowledge of this "diplomatic" will simplify enormously the task of the historian. Then, because the life of man is so bound up with his dwelling-place, geographical knowledge is necessary for the adequate comprehension of history. Chronology, too, is often vital.* An acquaintance with psychology will aid in the attempt to trace the series of mental operations which lie between the fact and the written record of its observation; while ethnology, economics, and sociology contribute their assistance in forming the background of events. In fact, "there is hardly any branch of knowledge which is not helpful to the true historian."†

It will thus be readily seen that historical investigation, contrary to popular belief, is neither easy

Great collections of sources have been published by Governments, by societies founded for the purpose, and by individuals; *e.g.*, The Rolls Series, The Historical MSS. Commission, The Camden Society, etc.

* See *Medieval Reckonings of Time*, by Reginald L. Poole, in this series.

† *The Methods of Historical Study*, by E. A. Freeman, p. 29 (Macmillan, 1886).

nor simple, but that it requires, on the other hand, a preparation as comprehensive and severe as that demanded by any other study. In fact, the magnitude of the task leads inevitably to specialization. For even one who makes historical study the business of his life cannot expect to master more than the original authorities for a few chosen periods.

II.—EXTERNAL CRITICISM

(A) Genuineness. (B) Localization. (C) Analysis. (D) Restoration of Text.

(A) GENUINENESS.

WHEN a student, equipped with a knowledge of the necessary auxiliary sciences, has discovered by the aid of bibliography or by independent research the documents which he seeks, his next task is to decide how much, if any, of these is entitled to be considered as trustworthy evidence. For it is from these documents that he must work his way back to the facts and attempt to see these facts as their first observers saw them.

Now in determining the value of the observations contained in any document the first step is to ascertain its *genuineness*. Is it a forgery? The long list of forgeries that could be readily written down by any student of history is a sufficient proof of the necessity of this preliminary question. The forged Decretals, which enjoyed an undisputed authority from their first appearance about the middle of the ninth century down to the fifteenth, and which affected and still affect the course of the world's history; the Donation of Constantine; the poems of Ossian; the *Eikon Basilike*, are known to all.* Nor is the day

* Bernheim's *Lehrbuch der historischen Methode* (Leipzig, 1908), pp. 345 ff., deals very satisfactorily with the Decretals and some other famous forgeries.

of the forger over. Two most striking instances of the art as practised in the nineteenth century are cited by Bernheim, the first dealing with the Moabite pottery and the second with the Sardinian literature commonly called "The Parchments of Arborea."

After the discovery of the Stone of Mesa, King of Moab, in 1866, and the interest evoked in its valuable inscription, Schapira, a dealer in antiquities in Jerusalem, offered for sale some old Hebrew inscriptions of a similar nature to that on the famous stone. Early in 1872, at the same place, there appeared pieces of pottery, then later on vases and urns with drawings and inscriptions, to the number of 2,000 pieces. An Arab, Selim, in the employment of European excavators brought these pieces to Jerusalem and sold them to Schapira. Naturally these finds created great interest, but some accused Schapira of fraud. He, however, along with some who were interested in the discovery, went to the place indicated by Selim and triumphantly found other articles of the same nature. Some German scholars defended the genuineness of the articles, and on their recommendation a great number of them were purchased for the Berlin Museum. Still the voice of criticism was not silenced, until E. Kautzsch and A. Socin finally settled the matter in a volume published in 1876. They showed by a variety of proofs, such as the modern shape of some of the pottery fragments, the want of traces of wear and tear of age, the form of the letters, etc., that the articles are counterfeit, and that the Arab Selim probably was the able author of the fraud.

The Sardinian literature was published in Italy from 1863 to 1865. It consisted of a series of letters, biographies, poems, etc., purporting to have been composed in Sardinia during a period running from the eighth to the fifteenth century. The MSS. were on parchment and paper, and were deposited in the library at Cagliari. As it was not known that such a state of culture as was implied in these literary remains had ever existed in Sardinia, the find created a sensation. A lively controversy arose in Italy over the genuineness of the material, and some of the originals were submitted for the opinion of the Academy of Science at Berlin. Jaffé examined the material of the MSS. and the handwriting, and found considerable evidence of a modern origin. Tobler conducted the literary and linguistic investigation and discovered impossibilities and contradictions which established the unauthentic character of the MSS. Dove took as the subject of his inquiry their historical contents and pronounced them to be one great anachronism. And thus the forgery was finally exposed.

The Revolutionary period in France was peculiarly prolific in the art of documentary falsification.* Several important Memoirs, long regarded as valuable sources, are now known to be unauthentic. The Memoirs of Weber are largely the work of Lally Tollendal. Beauchamp wrote the Memoirs of Fouché. Those of Robespierre are by Reybaud. In 1895 a work purporting to have been written in 1794 by Raoul Hesdin was published in London by John

* See the Appendix to Lord Acton's *Lectures on the French Revolution* (Macmillan, 1910).

Murray. It bore the title *The Journal of a Spy in Paris during the Reign of Terror* ; but a critical analysis of its contents proved it a forgery.* The reputed letters of Marie Antoinette abound in forgery. Her tragic fate and the strength of the contemporary passion for autographs led to the theft of letters bearing her signature, but as the demand soon exceeded the supply it was met by a vast number of very skilful forgeries. Forty-one letters, *e.g.*, from the Queen to Mme. de Lamballe, were disposed of in the market at enormous prices before it was discovered that not one was genuine.

But in those days the prince of forgers, as far as quantity is concerned, was Vrain-Denis Lucas. He served his apprenticeship to the art in an establishment which existed to supply the demands of those who desired creditable family pedigrees; and provided these latter were sufficiently distinguished their accuracy and validity were very secondary considerations. In the course of this work Lucas found occasion to fabricate some letters purporting to be from Montaigne, and, encouraged by his success, he went on to produce a series of forgeries which in number and variety is unique. To M. Charles he sold between 1861 and the beginning of 1870 over 27,000 forged letters, at a price of almost £6,000. These consisted, amongst others, of letters from Pascal to Robert Boyle, in which the former in 1652 is shown to have anticipated the laws of attraction whose discovery had been universally attributed to Newton

* An account of this critical examination is contained in the *English Historical Review* for July, 1896.

in 1687. The French Academy of Sciences, after a year and a half of disputation, gave a tentative official sanction to the letters, but a week later a M. Breton came forward to prove that six of these precious notes by Pascal had been taken verbatim from Saverien's *Histoires des Philosophes Modernes* (1760-1773). M. Chasles retorted to this damaging statement by declaring that Saverien had borrowed from the letters of Pascal and not *vice versa*. And Lucas buttressed this counter-attack by concocting letters from Saverien to the Marquise de Pompadour, in which he states that he is returning 200 letters from men of science like Pascal and Galileo, and refers to the great service these had rendered him in the production of his contemplated work on modern philosophers. The attack, however, went on. In 1869, M. Verrier at four sittings of the French Academy showed in detail the sources from which Lucas had borrowed many of his letters, whole passages being adopted without alteration from Saverien, Voltaire, etc. Then certain signatures of Galileo, sent to be compared with the genuine signature at Florence, were pronounced false. And after due trial Lucas was arrested and sent to prison for two years. His success is the more remarkable when we reflect that he was ignorant of Latin and of mathematics and wanting even in general education, yet for two years he successfully combated the French Academy and came near to conquering it. Amongst others, he forged letters from Shakespeare, Strabo, Bede, the Roman Emperors, Plato, and some of the Apostles. Lazarus writes to St. Peter and Mary Magdalene writes to Lazarus. And it does not seem

to have struck M. Chasles, who purchased the letters, as any whit curious that these early authors wrote on paper and in French; that Strabo writes to Juvenal, though Strabo was ninety-two when Juvenal was born; or that Bede writes to Alcuin, though Alcuin was only nine when Bede died !*

Turning to English history, a famous fraud is that perpetrated by Charles Julius Bertram. In 1747, while in correspondence with Dr. Stukeley, a well-known antiquary, he referred to a curious manuscript history of Roman Britain which he alleged he had seen in the possession of a friend. Stukeley asked for an extract from it, and an imitation having been sent it was pronounced by the keeper of the Cotton Library to be 400 years old. Then, in response to an urgent request from Stukeley, Bertram sent a transcript of the whole and a copy of the map which accompanied it. This was printed with some other material in 1757 and bore the title *Ricardi Monachi Westmonasteriensis Commentariolum Geographicum de Situ Britannicæ, et Stationum quas in ea Insula Romani ædificaverunt*. He states that he believes the work to have been written by Richard of Cirencester, who lived in the fourteenth century. In this work are described the manners and military institutions of the ancient Romans, and it gives the names of cities, roads, and boundaries of Roman Britain. It represents the Roman dominion as extending to Inverness and tells how the men of Surrey had crossed the Alps and besieged and laid waste the city of Rome. It gives

* *Literary Forgeries*, by J. A. Farrer (Longmans, Green and Co., 1917), chap. xii.

accounts of battles and sieges, of emigration to Ireland, of a persecution in which 17,000 Christians died, etc.

The influence of this forgery on British history can hardly be adequately realized. County historians of the nineteenth century rest upon it implicitly for information. Gibbon was misled by it, and from it the Ordnance Survey derived the names of Roman stations for their maps. Indirectly it still colours in many ways popular conceptions of Roman Britain. But notwithstanding its wide acceptance there were some who from the beginning regarded the whole treatise as a forgery. And in 1845 the scale was finally turned in this direction by the discovery of Karl Wex that its quotations from Tacitus were taken from recent editions and included modern emendations which were plainly beyond the knowledge of any monk of Westminster.*

The most complete examination is to be found in Mayor's Preface to his edition of Richard of Ciren-
cester's *Speculum Historiale de Gestis Regum Angliæ*.† He points out that before 1747 the *De Situ* was never named; that no MS. of it has ever been seen, nor has any credible explanation been given either of its supposed sudden discovery or of the equally sudden disappearance of the original; that Bertram's facsimile bears no resemblance to the handwriting of the fourteenth or of any century, and, so far from being a tracing or copy of any genuine original, is plainly a clumsy fabrication by an unpractised hand. He

* *Literary Forgeries*, by J. A. Farrar (Longmans, Green and Co., 1917), p. 34.

† *Rolls Series*, vol. ii. (1869).

goes on to show that the contents of the document bear equally evident marks of forgery. The Richard of Cirencester, who in his genuine works never cites even an ancient poet at first hand, in this displays a familiar acquaintance with the most recondite Greek and Latin authors, gives fragments of inscriptions and coins, quotes works extant only in one copy, etc. Then it is dissimilar in vocabulary and phraseology to Richard's genuine *Speculum*, and its Latinity, according to Mr. Woodward, has "the flavour of a public school exercise badly done." Furthermore, the origin of many of its facts can be traced. It follows Camden's order, Camden's division of Britain, Camden's guesses, and—most important of all—Camden's blunders. Its list of the "legati" in Britain does not go beyond Horsley's, and includes the second Trebellius whom Horsley inserted by mistake. There is throughout the affectation of ancient spelling, but no consistent adherence to the orthography of the fourteenth century. Mr. Mayor concludes with the caustic remark that the success of Ælfric is a singular reproach on the historical inquirers of the last 120 years, for "we find a forger, contemptible as penman, Latinist, historian, geographer, critic, imposing upon members of the Royal and Antiquarian Societies, and of the two ancient Universities . . . on the writers of Germany and Denmark, of England and Scotland," etc.

Another famous English forgery is the *History of the Monastery of Croyland*, attributed to Ingulph, a writer of the eleventh century. The author begins by stating his intentions of compiling a history of

Croyland Monastery, enumerating its benefactors, etc. He purports to depend upon the information of monks now living, and on the facts recorded in ancient muniments. The work, which is supposed to be written in A.D. 1089, is chiefly a history of Croyland Abbey with copies of charters said to have been granted to it by its many benefactors, but it contains many references to the history of the kingdom at large.

Both the history and the charters are forgeries, though for a long time they remained unsuspected and the work was generally regarded as a valuable memorial of Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman times. Thierry, *e.g.*, accepted it as genuine, and throughout his *Histoire de la conquête d'Angleterre* it is a frequent source of error and misconception. In 1695, however, Henry Wharton pointed out many anachronisms amongst the charters.* Thus he finds that the charter of Ethelbald is attested by Wynfrid and Aldwin; that of Wichtlaf by Godwin, Bishop of Rochester; that of Bertulph by the same Godwin; and that of Beorred by Alcwin, Bishop of Winchester, at times when none of these prelates were filling the sees respectively assigned to them. The vocabulary, too, is late. The word "leuca," a league (or rather a measure of 1,500 paces), is used in Ethelbald's charter, A.D. 716, though in reality it was not introduced until some centuries after this date by the Normans. Other similar anachronisms abound. He speaks of Philip Augustus, who was not born before A.D. 1166. He tells us that he studied logic and read

* In his *Latin History of the Bishops and Deans of London and St. Asaph* (London, 1695).

Tully and Aristotle at Oxford, whereas those studies were unknown there at that time. He talks of a certain canon holding prebend revenue (*pinguissimam præbendam*) before ever capitulary revenues were divided into prebends. The written characters are themselves evidence of a later origin, and, just as in the case of Bertram's *De Situ*, the sources from which its information has been derived have been traced. The whole work is evidently a compilation of a comparatively late period, and designed to advance the glory and legalize the greed of the Abbey authorities.*

We shall close our examples of forgery with a short account of the "Squire Papers."† These are a collection of letters attributed to Cromwell and are usually to be found printed in the Appendix to Carlyle's *Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*. The author was, in reality, Wm. Squire of Yarmouth, a local antiquarian and a man given to practical jokes. In January, 1847, after the first edition of the *Letters and Speeches* had appeared, he wrote to Carlyle eulogizing the book and then concluding by stating that he had in his possession the journal of one Sam Squire, who had been a trooper of Cromwell's, and who was an ancestor of his own. He also mentioned that he had other

* Hardy's Descriptive Catalogue, vol. ii., p. 58. H. T. Riley: *Archæological Journal*, vol. xix., pp. 32 and 114 ff. A lively account of Ingulph and of Bertram is to be found in Tout's *Mediæval Forgers and Forgeries*, John Rylands Lecture Series, Manchester, 1920.

† This is derived from Lomas's edition of Carlyle's *Cromwell's Letters and Speeches*, with an Introduction by Professor Firth (1904), Introduction, lxii ff.

papers relating to the same period. After further correspondence he sent Carlyle some thirty-five letters purporting to have been written by Cromwell, and, satisfied of their genuineness, Carlyle published them in *Fraser's Magazine* for December, 1847. With the headlong enthusiasm which distinguished him Carlyle informed the public that Wm. Squire was a man of "perfect veracity and even of scrupulous exactitude in details," and that "any remark or statement of his concerning them is to be entirely relied on." The letters, in short, were of "indubitable authenticity." But the learned world in general was not so sure as Carlyle. Antiquarians discovered details in the phraseology which aroused suspicion. They joined together, as Carlyle puts it, "like dogs answering each others' howls in the night," and the burden of their cry was forgery. The sage, however, was not to be moved. He renewed his confession of faith, and mortgaged the future in the interest of Squire by stating that he was not likely to doubt the letters "till the age of miracles come back." His wilful prejudice blinded his critical faculty. For the letters contained evident marks of fabrication. They abounded in nineteenth-century phraseology. Carlyle had never seen a single one of the original MSS. There was an absence of date on many, and very improbable dates on others, and when Squire was questioned regarding this he alleged that damp and vermin had eaten the dates or that he himself had conjecturally assigned dates based on the entries in his ancestor's journal. But all this, and even the many contradictory statements made by Squire

regarding the letters,* seems to have aroused no abiding doubts in the mind of Carlyle. In 1849 he saw Squire for the first time and described him minutely. He declared him to be "of the kind called half-mad," but this was explained by the fact that when a boy he had fallen and thereby "broken his skull into thirty-seven pieces"! He seemed to Carlyle to be too entirely ignorant to forge the letters, and his "large grey eyes full of innocence" bore eloquent and satisfying testimony to the authenticity of his statements. At last, however, complete exposure came, and the world knew, as most critics already knew, that Carlyle had been deceived by a transparent fraud! Squire's imbecility and ignorance were merely assumed, as convenient barriers against too strict inquiries, and as Professor Firth puts it, "that eminent humorist, having avenged Dry-as-dust, emigrated to New Zealand, where some twenty years later he closed in peace those 'large grey eyes full of innocence.'"

So many other similar instances might be cited, and so common is the art exemplified amongst historical materials, that the student must beware of going to the extreme of incredulity and treating genuine material as if it were forged. For "the extreme of mistrust in these matters is almost as mischievous as the extreme of credulity."† Père Harduin, *e.g.*, attributed the works of Horace and

* Aldis Wright, in the *English Historical Review*, April, 1886, p. 311.

† MM. Langlois and Seignobos, *Introduction aux études historiques* (English translation, 1898), p. 99.

Virgil to monks of the Middle Ages, and in the nineteenth century Aschbach branded as spurious the perfectly genuine writings of Hrotsuit of Gandersheim.* Nor must the student forget that a forgery may contain perfectly genuine information. For the inventor, in order to produce belief in his work, will be painstakingly accurate regarding those points which are not directly involved in his forgery.

The means of detection usually available are illustrated in the examples already given; but it remains to state more formally the method by which the genuineness of a source is usually determined.

It may be laid down as a general principle that, if a source is genuine, it will manifest the characteristics, outward and inward, which are common to all the literary products of that age. Accordingly the student will first examine carefully the *outward form* of the document in question. Endorsements and seals may provide valuable information. He will carefully appraise the antiquity of the parchment or papyrus, the age of the ink, the nature of the paper employed. He will ask, Is the handwriting, language, style, etc., that of the period during which the document purports to have been written? And in such matters as these the expert palæographer is difficult to deceive. The style of handwriting, as every schoolboy knows who reads his grandmother's letters, changes from generation to generation, and because this has always been so the expert can usually, with a fair amount of confidence, assign a document to a particular period. Then certain words vary in form, and even disappear,

* Bernheim, *Lehrbuch der historischen Methode* (1908), pp. 385 ff.

providing thus in themselves a useful test of genuineness. "Natheless" and "gramercy" are not usual in a twentieth-century vocabulary.*

Having dealt with the outward form, the critic turns then to the *actual contents* of the doubtful document. And he asks himself:

1. Do these contents agree with what we have learned from other genuine sources of the same period and place?

2. Is the writer ignorant of things which a writer of that time and place would have known, and at a certain point and in a certain connection would have mentioned? This question is the foundation of the famous (or infamous) "argument from silence" which is so often used where other evidence is scarce or wanting. Its legitimate use requires caution. It does not follow that because a fact has not been recorded it has not been observed.

3. Does the writer display a knowledge of events which have happened *after* the supposed date of writing, or of things which could only have been known in a later age? It is here that most frequently the forger fails to succeed in his deceit. "Anachronisms are the rock on which counterfeit works always run most risk of shipwreck."† For it is almost impossible for a writer to conceal entirely his knowledge of later

* It should be remembered that sometimes the outward form of a genuine document is deliberately tampered with in order to cause its rejection. A very skilful attempt to cast doubt on a genuine document by erasing and re-writing over the erasure is related in *Select Cases before the Council* (Selden Society), pp. 97-100.

† Farrer, J. A., *Literary Forgeries* (Longmans, Green and Co., 1907), p. 2.

events and things or to avoid transposing items of this knowledge into the earlier period.* He will speak of gunpowder when this was unknown, or he will construct itineraries which imply modern means of communication; or he will in some way or other betray his acquaintance with inventions and articles unknown to the period in which he seeks to set his forgery. The youthful Chatterton, for example, having first written out his verses, proceeded by the help of an Anglo-Saxon dictionary to give them that necessary air of antiquity by which he sought to secure their acceptance as ancient and valuable relics of fifteenth-century poetry. The dictionary he used was that of Kersey or Bailey, and its use, of course, involved the poet in the mistakes which occur in its pages. When we find, for example, that Chatterton uses the word "cherisaunei" (instead of "cherisaunce" for "comfort") and discover that Kersey precedes him in the selfsame error, we have taken a long step on the road that leads to the exposure of the poems.

If the source passes all these tests of outward form and inner content the student may finally ask:

4. Does the information drawn from this source fit into and hang together naturally with what we already know of the course of development in the period to which it purports to belong? It is clear that an

* The Robin Hood Ballads purport to deal with incidents in the reigns of Richard I. and John; yet they speak of feats of archery only possible when the long bow had been developed, which was fully a century later.

It was through his knowledge of later events that the forger of *The Journal of a Spy* was betrayed.

adequate answer to this question demands the detailed knowledge of a master of the period, coupled with an insight and a judicial sense which are the ripe fruits of trained and strenuous investigation. In fact, from all these tests it will be readily seen that an adequate fund of knowledge concerning the source-material of the period in which the forgery is said to have originated is the prime essential for its detection, because the inquiry as to genuineness is carried out in the main by a series of comparisons.

It only remains to be stated that in addition to these main tests there are several subsidiary considerations which add to the certainty of the verdict. These embrace, *e.g.*, the conditions, suspicious or otherwise, under which the document was discovered, and the existence of hate or prejudice which would supply a motive for its falsification. *The pedigree and custody of a document are always to be taken into account.* There are certain sources of origin which may very reasonably be suspected. There are others, such as official files, etc., which as the natural places of custody will carry with them a presumption of trustworthiness.

(B) LOCALIZATION.

If the document we are investigating comes out unscathed by the foregoing tests the next step is its "provenance" or localization; *e.g.*, the discovery of *when* it was written, *where* it was written, *who* was the writer; or, in other words, its date, its place of origin, and its authorship. Without this knowledge the value of the document cannot be rightly deter-

mined. But it should be stated that the actual *name* of the author is not in itself always of great importance. We want more especially to know what kind of person he was, his station in society, etc., so that we may better appraise his evidence. We can know these things sometimes without the name. In fact, except when the name is that of a person otherwise known to us it is of no particular moment.

It is apparent that if the document be genuine, and the name of the author and place and time of writing be set out on the title-page, there is usually no need of further investigation. We shall only require to guard against identifying date and place of writing with date and place of printing, and to take into account the possibility that the author on the title-page may not be the real author.

But when there is no title-page or like information, how do we determine the origin of a source? In attempting to answer this question it is evident that the considerations taken into account above in determining the genuineness of a document are interwoven with those which are used in determining its localization.

1. We shall deal first of all with *the date*. This is settled very roughly by a study of *the document's form*, its handwriting, language, style, and contents. The expert in handwriting will usually be able to date that of the record approximately. The philologist assists us with his knowledge of the birth and use and death of words or expressions. There are certain words which appear for the first time in a language in a certain century.* If such a word is in our document,

* This is even more true of legal formulæ.

it must have been written after that date. Then there are words which disappear. If such a word occurs, the document containing it was written before such disappearance. *not necessarily*

Having thus very approximately fixed a period, we endeavour to determine the date more definitely from *the general contents of our source*. A matter-of-fact reference to an event, for instance, proves that the record was made after or at the time of such an event. The use of such expressions as "up to this time" sometimes furnishes a valuable clue. In this connection, too, we are in the habit of using the "argument from silence" referred to before. The writer, we argue, fails to mention an event: therefore he wrote before it occurred. But this inference is not always valid. He may have had no occasion to mention it, or for some reason decided to omit it, and therefore no conclusion should be founded on this argument unless it is otherwise supported. These references, omissions, etc., frequently enable us to fix the date with accuracy; but sometimes when all is said and done we must be satisfied with stating that the source belongs to a period lying between two extremes, that it must have been written before a certain date and yet could not have been written later than a certain other date.

2. *The place of origin* is next to be determined, and here it is the contents of the document which serve as the most valuable index. A writer, for instance, will display exceptionally minute knowledge of the history of a certain province or town or monastery. He will relate certain details, and assume familiarity

on the part of the reader with certain local nomenclature and usage. And in this and similar ways we are enabled to arrive at a conclusion regarding the place of origin.

3. The third requirement, *the authorship of the source*, is often determined by a comparison with other sources of the same time and place. Handwriting and style sometimes give us definite results, though the argument from style requires very careful handling. For the style of an author changes with age, or with his subject, or with the class of readers he addresses. And because all writers of a given period will have much in common we cannot argue too confidently from resemblances that may possibly be accidental.

Often a writer will make a reference to himself, to his occupation or to his position, or to some person with whom he has relations, and thus give us a valuable clue to his identity. Or references may be made to his work in other writers, or quotations given in these to which his name is attached.

The following is an example of the above processes at work on the problem of localization:*

One of the most important sources for German history of the late ninth century is a chronicle written by Regino, Abbot of Prüm. It ceases at A.D. 907, and is continued from 907 until 967 by a writer unknown. Who was he?

From an examination of his work it is clear that he worked in the sixties. For the earlier portion of

* Bernheim, p. 407, cited from *Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde* (1896), Bd. 21, S. 198 ff.

his narrative he used other annals, but for this later part he was more independent and detailed. He manifests so great an interest in the cloister of St. Maximin at Trier, and narrates so many events which only a resident would be likely to enumerate, that it is evident he belongs to it. He records, for example, its fall in A.D. 934; its consecration when newly built; the expulsion of monks who would not accommodate themselves to the sterner rule introduced in 934; the restoration of the privilege of a free election; the exact succession of abbots; etc. Now a resident in a cloister, engaged in literary work, must be assumed to have been a monk. And this first inference gains weight from the fact that the first part of Regino's chronicle, which our unknown writer continued, was written in the Monastery of St. Maximin, where Regino took refuge on expulsion from Prüm.

Now amongst the few persons of the cloister mentioned by this unknown writer of the chronicle, one, Adalbert by name, stands out very prominently. The chronicle goes into personal details of his life and career. In A.D. 961 it is recorded that he was sent as a wandering preacher to Russia, at the instigation of Archbishop William of Mainz, and the pungent comment is added that he might have expected something better than this at the hands of that superior. We are informed that for this journey the King fitted him out, that in A.D. 962 he returned from his unsuccessful mission, passing through great dangers and receiving a jubilant welcome at home. The writer, in fact, throughout is so well-informed upon the adven-

tures and the details of the career of Adalbert, and imports so much feeling into this part of his chronicle, that he must have been on most intimate terms with Adalbert, or else he must have been Adalbert himself. For the latter of these two deductions we have some further evidence based on what we know of Adalbert from other sources. We know from his career that he was an educated man, and the writer of the chronicle displays in language and style a culture not common in his day. Then there is the fact that the chronicle mentions the transfer of Adalbert to Weissenburg in 966 and breaks off with the year 968, the year he became Archbishop of Magdeburg. From all this it is exceedingly probable that the author of the continuation of Regino's chronicle was Adalbert himself.

(C) ANALYSIS OF SOURCE.

After its localization, the next step in the task of the student is the analysis of the source. This is necessary because all the events recorded by the writer have not, as a rule, been directly observed by him, and consequently his evidence is not of equal value regarding every fact dealt with in his narrative. It is of great importance in serious and sound historical work that what the witness knows at first hand should be distinguished from that which he has derived from others. Yet this is not always done. For example, the question as to the migration of the Bœotians from Thessaly to Bœotia is often decided on the ground of a statement by Thucydides. But if ever such a migration took place it must have occurred several

hundreds of years before his day, and it must have remained uncommitted to writing for several generations. Consequently Thucydides cannot be regarded as a good authority on the point in dispute. As a matter of fact, in dealing with the historical narrative of Thucydides as a whole, we are brought to a halt repeatedly because we often cannot distinguish between his personal knowledge and information derived by him from unknown sources.

A similar inability meets us when we come to analyze the sources of all early Roman history; and after a careful examination of these Sir George Cornewall Lewis came to the conclusion that "all the historical labour bestowed upon the early centuries of Rome will in general be wasted."* The tradition as established in the time of Livy and Dionysius is incapable to a considerable extent of verification and furnishes no solid basis of credibility with regard to specific facts. Knowing little of the material which Livy had at his command, we have no method of ascertaining what portions of it are trustworthy as resting on solid evidence, for Livy is no more an original authority on any of the periods he deals with than is Mommsen. The result is that only a very meagre outline of the earliest condition of Rome is able to win acceptance at the hands of sound historical criticism.† Niebuhr rejected the conflicts of dubious personalities and tried to leave

* See *An Enquiry into the Credibility of the Early Roman History*, by the Right Hon. Sir George Cornewall Lewis (London, 1855).

† See *Livy*, Book I., with Introduction by J. R. Seeley, M.A. (Clarendon Press, 1874).

institutions and tendencies standing out clearly, but there is no reliable evidence for some of the sources which he assumed, and his reconstruction of early Roman constitutional history is therefore open to serious attack. "Historical investigation," in fact, "is fruitless unless some means exist of tracing the alleged facts to contemporary witnesses and of estimating their credibility."* Where this is impossible we must rest content with ignorance and uncertainty.

Coming down to more modern times, analysis often shakes our complete confidence in documents hitherto regarded as primary records. It informs us, for example, that the copies of the *Moniteur* dealing with the events of the French Revolution from May 5, 1789, up to November of the same year, were all printed several years later in order to make the file complete. Consequently these issues have no original value as sources, but are merely second-hand compilations from other newspapers and contemporary histories. Therefore, in dealing with the period in question, we proceed directly to these other original sources, ignoring entirely the derived issues of the *Moniteur*.

The problem of analysis becomes more difficult when we have two or three records dealing with the same events, because the relationship between these sources must be established before they can be accurately used as authorities. The evidence of two or

* *A Treatise on the Methods of Observation and Reasoning in Politics*, by George Cornewall Lewis, Esq. (London, 1852), vol. i., p. 278.

more credible eyewitnesses will, as a rule, sufficiently establish a fact, *but the witnesses must be independent of each other*. It cannot be too often emphasized that references in support of a fact do not increase in value in direct ratio to their number. Certain events of July 14, 1789, are reported in the *Moniteur*, in the history by "Deux amis de la liberté," and thirdly in the procès-verbal of the city government of Paris. But nevertheless we have not here three witnesses. We have only one. Because analysis informs us that the *Moniteur* and the history copied from the procès-verbal. This question of dependence or otherwise is of primary importance. Sometimes it can be settled by the localization of the sources. For this may establish the fact that only one contains direct knowledge of the events, and that the information embodied in the others must have been indirect. Where this method cannot be fruitfully used, the accounts must be carefully compared. This comparison is based on two fundamental principles:

1. When two or more individuals perceive the same event, they do not seize upon exactly the same details, nor record them in exactly the same way.*

2. When two or more individuals give expression to independent conceptions they do not make use of exactly the same verbal forms.†

* "The usual character of human testimony is substantial truth under circumstantial variety."—PALEY: *Evidences of Christianity*, part iii., chap. i.

† "The great complexity of historical events makes it extremely improbable that two independent observers should narrate them in the same manner."—MM. LANGLOIS AND SEIGNOBOS: *Introduction aux études historiques* (English translation, 1898), p. 95.

Accordingly, if two accounts agree in reporting the same details in approximately similar forms (*these forms not being of the number of fixed forms to be found in every language*),* then such accounts are not independent. Even the presence of a similar *arrangement* of complex details, although there is diversity of language, is by itself sufficient to arouse legitimate suspicion of dependency.

When relationship is established between two documents, the original of the pair is determined by various indications. Where an expression used correctly in one document is misunderstood in another, the former is usually the original. Where one is disconnected and awkward in expression and style, while the other is smooth and well arranged, the former is the original. Tampering with statements and modifying facts for the purpose of establishing a prejudice or making a case betrays the copyist, while any additions or omissions often give valuable clues as to priority and interdependence. Where there is a considerable number of sources to be analyzed the question of dependence is increased in complexity, but it is to be solved by a more elaborate application of the principles already outlined.

It is interesting to note in passing that through this process of analysis a lost source can sometimes be approximately restored, being preserved by embodiment in other documents. Chronicles frequently contain long extracts from unacknowledged sources,

* This qualification is very important. The number of fixed formulæ is considerable, and particularly in official documents may mislead.

and these latter can in favourable cases be removed and fitted together.

Thus Giesebrecht, while engaged with some medieval chronicles, found that all of them copied from a lost chronicle of the eleventh century. He collected all these extracts and from them restored the lost source. The discovery of the latter itself in 1867 confirmed the substantial accuracy of his work.

Another example is to be found in the long-lost *Apology* of Aristides. This is referred to in the ninth century, but then disappeared for 1000 years. In 1878 the monks of St. Lazzaro at Venice published a Latin translation of an Armenian fragment of the *Apology*. In 1889 Professor Rendel Harris discovered a Syriac version of the whole *Apology* in a convent on Mount Sinai and translated it into English (*Texts and Studies*, Cambridge, 1891, i., 1). Then Dean J. A. Robinson found that the *Apology* is contained in the *Life of Barlaam and Josaphat* ascribed to St. John Damascene. During the Middle Ages this *Life* had been translated into some twenty languages.

(D) THE RESTORATION OF THE ORIGINAL TEXT.

With the restoration of the text the work of external criticism is completed. In the case of modern sources where the originals are available this task is practically limited to corrections of misspelling or the comparison of a printed source with its manuscript original. In the case of older sources, however, the original MSS. have for the most part been lost and only copies survive. The oldest of our great MSS.

of the New Testament is hardly earlier than A.D. 350; while classical MSS., for the most part, date from the fifteenth century.

Now copies such as these, being prior to the invention of printing about A.D. 1450, were made by hand.* And because men are fallible even trained copyists inadvertently make mistakes. In professing to give (Book V., 47) the accurate copy of a treaty, Thucydides presents no less than thirty-one variations from the rendering of the actual text, which has been recovered.† And where an ignorant workman was employed blunders are still more numerous. Now these mistakes, if uncorrected, appeared in the subsequent copies made from that containing them, with new and additional errors. Thus with each successive copying the text became less accurate, just as a story departs farther and farther from the original with each repetition. Therefore, in dealing with MS. sources, the possibility of corruption must always be taken into account.

* It is this fact which, as we have already stated, assists us frequently in determining the date of a document, whether of a copy or of an original. Handwriting, like every other art, has its phases of growth, perfection, and decay. Down to the introduction of printing it ran in two lines: the natural cursive, for the ordinary business of life, and the set book hand. The latter was superseded by the printing press, the former survives. By an exact and painstaking comparative study of surviving examples the lines of evolution in its various branches have been traced, and we are able to date approximately a MS. from the evidence afforded by its handwriting. See *Introduction to Greek and Latin Palæography*, by Sir E. M. Thompson (Oxford), 1912. Also for the development and changes in the charter or court hand, as practised in England, see *English Court Hand*, C. Johnson and C. H. Jenkinson (1915).

† *History of Greek Literature*, Mahaffy, ii., 121.

Where several independent copies of an original exist, errors can often be detected and eliminated by a careful comparison coupled with textual analysis. Alterations are due either to fraud or error. To the first of these causes can be traced deliberate falsification and interpolation. The practice is old and examples are many. A line was inserted in the second book of the *Iliad* with a view to confirming the title of the Athenians to the possession of Salamis, a title which was disputed with them by their neighbours, the Megarians.* And a humorous instance of falsification is to be found in the treatment of a passage in Platina's *Lives of the Popes*. In his life of St. Cletus there is a reference to St. Luke, in which it is stated that "he had a wife in Bithynia." In some versions of the sixteenth century this passage was boldly altered to read, "he had *not* a wife in Bithynia," while in others the expression was altogether omitted. But notwithstanding the numerous examples of fraudulent alteration or suppression or interpolation most errors are due to accident or mistaken judgment on the part of the copyist. He has attempted to carry too much of the original in his memory instead of keeping an eye continually on the text, and this has resulted in omissions and mistakes. Carelessness and ignorance cause transposition of words, repetition, misspelling, errors in punctuation, etc. Then a very frequent source of corruption lies in the tendency manifested by most copyists to correct what they

* *The Iliad of Homer*, edited by Leaf and Bayfield (London, 1895), vol. i., p. 316. Solon is usually accused of the fabrication, but the line is sometimes said to have been inserted by Peisistratos.

ignorantly imagine to be mistakes in their originals. Accordingly they will change strange words into words with which they are familiar, and they will radically amend difficult constructions. Sometimes, too, a scribe, eager to miss nothing, will embody in his copy a marginal note which has been written on the side of his original;* and often blunders were made in the interpretation of abbreviations or conventional contractions.† Even a trivial error of transcription has produced serious but sometimes amusing controversy. It was at one time hotly argued by certain men that Aristotle was a Jew, and this contention was entirely due to the misplacing of a comma in George of Trébisbond's version of the works of Josephus. The vitiated passage stood thus: "Atque, ille inquit,

* Familiar examples of this are to be found in the Gospel of St John, vii. 53–viii. 11, and v. 4.

† It is important to remember that in ancient MSS. all the words are not written at full length, and the contractions and abbreviations are so many as to make the document unintelligible to those not familiar with them. Many of these latter are so much alike that mistakes both in copying and interpretation are natural where the signs are not carefully made, while the fact that the signs varied in different times and places makes interpretation often difficult. In Dr. O'Connor's translations from the Irish *Annals of the Four Masters* many serious errors are due to incorrect deciphering of the contractions contained in the autograph MS. A concrete example from ecclesiastical history is as follows. The ancient martyrology of St. Jerome sets down for February 16, A.D. 309, eleven martyrs who perished with St. Pamphilius. After the words "Juliani cum Egyptiis v." was added "mil," an abbreviation of "militibus"; the whole meaning, "Julian with five Egyptian soldiers." But the copyists supposed that "mil" meant "millibus" and wrote "Juliani cum aliis quinque millibus"—i.e., "Julian with five thousand others." This was copied into all the martyrologies and used as an additional proof of the ferocity of Diocletian and Maximian, the great Christian persecutors.

Aristoteles Judæus erat" (and, he says, Aristotle was a Jew). The correct version is, "Atque ille, inquit Aristoteles, Judæus erat" (and he, says Aristotle, was a Jew). Instances like these, however, might be multiplied indefinitely.

Now it is evident from the preceding that the older MSS., which are the results of few copyings, are more reliable as a rule than later MSS., which are the results of many copyings. But nevertheless, in a comparison of the relative value of two MSS., it must be borne in mind that corruption may possibly have been more rapid in one line of transmission than in another, and that consequently priority of date may not necessarily confer an advantage. "All trustworthy restoration of corrupted texts is founded on the study of their history—that is, of the relations of descent or affinity which connect the several documents."* The genealogy of a copy is all-important, because no multiplication of copies, however numerous, can add one jot to the authority of the single original from which they sprang. Thus a reading existent in a single MS. may combat successfully a variant reading found in a hundred or more, if these latter are all copied from one original. Where more than one copy exists, therefore, it is the task of the critic to establish the exact relationship between them, to classify the lines of descent amongst variant readings, tracing them to their original sources if possible, and then to appraise their value. In this way a better text than that of any single copy already in existence

* *The N.T. in the Original Greek*, Westcott and Hort (1887), p. 545.

can be built up, the critic choosing in all disputed cases the reading which is best attested.

Where only a single copy of a text exists it is extremely difficult to restore a completed reading. The omission of a line or lines is irreparable. But sometimes an unintelligible expression can be restored and the reason of its existence satisfactorily explained. The example quoted by Langlois* is the passage in the Letters of Seneca beginning "Philosophia unde dicta sit, apparet; ipso enim nomine fatetur. Quidam et sapientiam ita quidam finierunt," etc. Madvig saw that this as it stands is not intelligible. But suspecting the copyist, and knowing that the original was written in capitals with no separation between words, he put the passage into this form: ". . . FATETURQUIDAMETSAPIENTIAM. . . ." Then he discovered that the copyist had divided the letters wrongly and that the true reading should be ". . . ipso enim nomine fatetur quid amet. Sapientiam ita quidam finierunt." There are other striking emendations in the case of single copies, but sometimes the text is so corrupt that satisfactory restoration is impossible and all emendations remain mere conjectures.

A good example of textual criticism at its best is to be found in the work which has been done on the writings of the New Testament. In 1895 Lord Acton informed a Cambridge audience that "when we are told that England is behind the Continent in critical faculty we must admit that this is true as to quantity,

* MM. Langlois and Seignobos, *Introduction aux études historiques* (English translation), p. 78.

not as to quality of work. . . . Lightfoot and Hort were critical scholars that neither Frenchman nor German has surpassed."* The brilliant work of these and others has been continued and extended, and there is now only a mere fraction of the whole New Testament concerning which there is any serious textual doubt. There are very few early writings with regard to which we can make so near an approach to the very words of the writers. With more than 2,000 copies to examine the number of variant readings is enormous. But most of these latter may be very quickly disposed of. The mistakes are precisely those made by all copyists. Words are omitted or doubled; frequent slips are due to an attempt to memorize a passage and thus avoid continually consulting the MS.; now and then a word will be changed in order to make a sentence read more smoothly, or to express a meaning in a clearer fashion, or to make the passage agree with another similar one; insertions and additions have in a few cases crept in; and in a few rare instances a change has been introduced to emphasize a doctrine. Infinite pains have been spent during the last century on the examination of MSS. and early Christian literature, and the result is practical certainty as to the original text of the New Testament documents.

* *A Lecture on the Study of History* (Macmillan, 1895), p. 44.

III.—INTERNAL CRITICISM

(A) Value of Source. (B) Interpretation. (C) Establishment of Facts.

HAVING completed the work of external criticism, it remains to determine the value of the evidence before us, to interpret it correctly, and then to use it in the establishment of those facts which form our goal.

(A) DETERMINATION OF VALUE OF SOURCE.

1. The value of the evidence contained in a document is affected in the first place by *the character of the document* in question. Newspapers, for example, as a rule express the views of a party, and this bias may affect even their accounts of facts. Political pamphlets are full of *ex parte* statements, and political biographies are often of the same nature. Records of speeches in olden times are frequently rhetorical exercises or deliberate fabrications more or less plausible. In comparatively modern times Parliamentary speeches have been reported from memory, and necessarily embody much that is doubtful. Monumental inscriptions are often for the express purpose of glorifying the dead. Genealogies are sometimes fabricated because of pride or to support legal claims. All biographies are liable to impregnation with a spirit of hero-worship or its opposite. War-bulletins are notoriously untrustworthy, both

from the suppression of facts and deliberate falsification or invention for so-called military and political reasons. Diplomatic correspondence is a sphere where lies lie "thick as leaves in Vallombrosa." Then we do not go to a comedy for detailed and reliable knowledge touching men and events, and popular ballads are a very precarious source for facts. It will thus be readily recognized that even contemporary accounts of events are frequently distorted by prejudice, passion, interest, or ignorance. And each class of document has its own peculiar tendencies, and must be weighed with an eye to the deforming influences to which it has been especially liable.

2. In the second place the value of a source is influenced by *the individuality of its author*. This indeed may be regarded as the most important factor in the question of worth. The document is simply the record of its author's conceptions regarding certain events. The value of these depends clearly on the personality of the witness. Accordingly we must inquire concerning his intellectual equipment and his moral standards. Or more exactly we ask, Was he able to observe and then describe the event correctly, and was he desirous of seeing and writing the truth?

In order to form some conception of these qualifications the historian asks, In what social order did the witness move? What was his education? What were his mental powers? What was his occupation in life? Had he any special training which fitted him to observe the particular class of facts he records? What opportunities had he for observing them? And then he asks, Were his prejudices and passions so strong that

he would be likely deliberately or unconsciously to misrepresent what he saw and heard? Finally, if the historian finds reason to doubt the honesty of the observer (*i.e.*, that he did not consider it his duty to speak the truth, or that his moral life is of a low quality), this consideration will seriously influence any estimate of the value of such an observer's evidence.

We close this section by a brief enumeration of tests formulated in the main by M. Seignobos.* These consist of the motives or reasons which may cause an author to violate truth or to be inaccurate. The reasons for doubting good faith are:

(a) The author has an interest in deceiving.

(b) The author was in a situation which compelled him to violate truth—*e.g.*, in drawing up an official document which must conform to rule and custom even where the actual facts are in some point or other in conflict with such rule or custom.

(c) Sympathy or antipathy of party, doctrine, race, etc.

(d) Vanity or the desire to appear in a favourable light, and the consequent appropriation of praiseworthy actions or words—*e.g.*, in the Memoirs of Napoleon.

(e) Deference to public opinion, polite phrases, set speeches, conformity to convention.

(f) Literary artifice in the embellishment of facts according to the æsthetic notions of a writer.

The next list is designed to illustrate the reasons

* MM. Langlois and Seignobos, *Introduction aux études historiques* (English translation), p. 166.

for distrusting the accuracy of a statement. These reasons are:

(a) An unconscious tendency to observe badly because of physical defects, hallucination, illusion, or mere prejudice.

(b) The author was badly situated for observing.

(c) Negligence or idleness which prevented the actual eyewitnessing of the facts, and led to the reporting of details which were merely inferred or imagined at random.

(d) The fact not of a nature to be directly observed. Thucydides, *e.g.*, could hardly know the contents of the sealed letter sent by Pausanias to the Persian King Xerxes. Comprehensive statements regarding groups of men or things can often only be derived from observations by many witnesses, and so are often merely inferences and indirect—*e.g.*, the account of a great modern battle is compiled from many reports which owing to the press of duty could not be written at the time. Witnesses are interviewed after the events, questions sent out and answered, and the final form of the report is a collation of several accounts.

3. In the third place the value of a document is influenced by its *time and place*. The general conditions obtaining in a particular age affect the character of a witness's testimony and must be taken into account. Such conditions are: the lack of railways, telegraphs, and regular posts, etc.—*e.g.*, in the Middle Ages; the presence or absence of aids to research; a low standard of truth; a general unscientific state of public opinion; etc. Then with regard to the influence of place we must take note,

e.g., of the nationality of our author. It must be remembered that Cæsar described the border German tribes from the standpoint of a Roman of his time. The influence of place on the various surviving descriptions of organization in the early Christian Church is so considerable that E. Hatch once said that "we cannot determine the value of any item of evidence until we have localized it."*

(B) INTERPRETATION OF SOURCE.

Having arrived at an estimate of the value of the source, the historian will go on to interpret it. In order to do so he must first of all be able to read it, to translate correctly the abbreviations common to its class and time, and to understand all its peculiar features. In order to do this in some cases a considerable training in ancient scripts may be essential, and the critic's knowledge of the language of the source must be accurate and extensive. He must know the precise meaning of the words used in the language of the period in question,† and sometimes

* *The Organization of the Early Church* (1882), p. 12.

† This is a very important consideration in the correct interpretation of a document, and examples are innumerable. A few are appended. In classical Latin "vel" can only mean "or" and "even." But at the time of the Theodosian Code it began to be used for "and." This latter usage was frequent during the Middle Ages. (See Du Cange, *Glossarium Mediæ et Infimæ Latinitatis*, vol. vi., p. 755; Paris: Didot, 1846.) In our own tongue we are confronted with the change in the meaning of such words as "knave," which originally meant "boy"; "villain," which simply meant "peasant"; "boor," which meant "farmer"; "daft" in early English meant "modest," and "silly" meant "innocent"; "tawdry" was a word formerly applied, with no condemnatory meaning, to lace purchased at the fair of St. Audrey; etc.

a knowledge of local dialect is demanded. He must also know how certain words are used by the particular writer with whom he is dealing, and how the same word differs in meaning with different contexts. In order to interpret, *e.g.*, the works of Gregory of Tours it is not enough to know Latin in a general way. It is essential to be acquainted with the particular kind of Latin written by Gregory of Tours.

Then the possibility must be sometimes taken into consideration that the real meaning of the writer is hidden by jest, sarcasm, or allegory.

Again, correct interpretation will depend on a knowledge of *the conditions under which the document was written*. It may have been designed to amuse, or abuse, or prove a case. The time and place of origin will yield considerations which must be given due weight. But of vital importance is *the individuality of the author*. His point of view, his social circle, his education, interests, etc., must always be kept before us in interpreting his work. In short, in order to interpret a source correctly, the conditions of time and place must be so reconstructed that the historian views the document as nearly as possible from the standpoint of a contemporary, while the personality of the author must be so real that the historian can as nearly as possible see the events narrated through the eyes of their writer.

We may illustrate this section by a reference to the considerable period of English history when we are dependent largely on chronicles written by monks. The difficulty of language and abbreviations having been surmounted, we must remember in

interpreting such a chronicle that its author lived to some extent apart from the world, that he would be greatly interested in events which affected his own order, that the attitude of a King or a noble to his particular order or monastery might colour his interpretation or description of such a King's or noble's character, that he would naturally seek to record exceptional rather than normal events, that he might be out of touch to some extent with certain phases of public opinion, that sometimes his source of information might be travellers' gossip unsupported by evidence, that a subsequent copyist might sometimes modify or strengthen the expressions of his original source.*

A very different set of considerations would affect such "Court" chronicles as those of Ralph of Diceto or Roger Hoveden, and these considerations the reader can readily frame.

(C) THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FACTS.

We have now by critical processes decomposed our documents into a series of statements, and regarding these statements we have formed an estimation of value. Some of them we have labelled as probably true, the degree of such probability being high or low. Others of these statements we regard

* Matthew Paris when re-editing the chronicle of Roger of Wendover frequently adds on his own account very abusive epithets to the names of the leaders of the royal forces. It is an interesting question whether Stubbs and Green did not attach undue weight to these epithets in their historical portraits of some of the characters affected. See *The Manufacture of Historical Material*, by J. W. Jeudwine (London, 1916), pp. 160 ff.

with varying degrees of suspicion. Some we look upon as worthless. It remains to formulate the principles which should guide us in the use of these statements to establish the facts which form the goal of our investigation. We shall deal first of all with conceptions.

1. *Conceptions*.—The existence of certain ideas and thoughts is completely established by the evidence of one genuine source. Thus the existence and nature of the ideas on government expressed in Aristotle's *Politics* can be established from one authentic copy of his book on that subject. We are not concerned with the objective validity of his views, we only desire to establish their existence and nature. From conceptions thus established we derive material for the history of ideas, dogmas, doctrines, the development of architecture, painting, etc.

2. *Elements*.—From a single document, even when it is the product of the writer's imagination, we can establish the existence of the raw materials with which the author worked. Thus if a poet mentions "golden gates" we know that for him "gold" existed and that "gates" existed. But we must note that the combination "golden gates" need not necessarily have had any objective reality. We can only deal with the *elements* which are used by the author. These are not reducible. In this way we can, within rigid boundaries, deduce certain elements from which the conjectural outlines of a social framework may be built. But the process has very definite limitations. For the writer may be drawing even his elemental material from a foreign country

or from a distant age. He may be working with elements which are not at all common, or which are even altogether outside his own personal experience. Consequently we must be critically careful to avoid the many pitfalls into which we may blunder. But within its own fixed limits the whole process is legitimate and gives results which otherwise would be unattainable.*

3. *Objective Facts.* — With the establishment of these the case is quite different. From a single source we obtain by analysis, etc., a series of statements bearing labels of value. These labels range in classification from a very high degree of probability through many intermediate degrees down to bare possibility or absolute worthlessness. But even in the case of those labelled “highly probable” there is still a certain lack of complete assurance that the fact was as stated. The possibilities of error are so many that the affirmation of a single source with regard to an external fact is not usually by itself sufficient to thoroughly establish that fact. In order to do so we must, if possible, compare the confirming affirmations to be found on the same point in different independent sources. In establishing objective facts, then, we may formulate the following principles:

(a) Where there is only a single affirmation regarding a fact, such fact is to be cited as resting on the

* The Homeric poems enable us to form a conception of contemporary primitive Greece, though their authors knew little about the prior actual siege of Troy. For in constructing their pictures of the latter they necessarily made use of the elements found in the society of which they themselves formed a part, and these elements furnish us with materials for the reconstruction of that society.

authority of its witness. Owing to the general character of the latter the statement may possess an exceedingly high degree of probability, yet it is not to be regarded as so thoroughly established that inferences may with complete confidence be drawn from it alone. Where the narrative of a modern historian rests on the testimony of a single witness, the reader should know that it is so, and know who the witness was.

(b) Where two or more contemporary and direct witnesses report the same fact, with numerous substantially agreeing details of a casual nature, then the truth of the accounts so far as they agree may be regarded as established, provided that the witnesses were independent and that the fact and its details were so evident to an observer that the possibility of self-deception can be reasonably excluded.

This latter principle presupposes a sound and complete criticism of the various sources, their tested genuineness, localization, analysis, and interpretation. It requires that there actually was no interdependence between the witnesses, that no careless assumptions are made by the critic, that in short all the conditions have been fulfilled. It is only natural that, owing to the scarcity of ancient documents, cases where all these necessary conditions are unequivocally present are comparatively rare in any but modern times. It is also clear that it is easier to establish general facts—*i.e.*, customs, doctrines, great events—than to establish a particular fact, such as a saying or a momentary act. The possibility of self-deception raises the question of miracles. Any adequate

discussion of the point, however, is impossible here. But we must realize in this connection that the growing sense of the limits of our scientific knowledge leaves a wider field than was formerly allowed for the possibility of extraordinary events.*

In cases where our affirmations from different sources regarding certain facts are contradictory we compare them critically. This comparison sometimes reveals the fact that the apparently conflicting accounts do not in reality refer to the same event, or to the same place, or to the same period, and that consequently all may possibly be accurate. Where the contradiction is real, examination may reveal that one account is open to suspicion, while another is very probably true. Or we may discover that all are open to suspicion.

Sometimes the discovery of an additional independent source enables us to arrive at a definite decision; but if after all tests have been applied we can still only apportion an equal degree of probability to conflicting statements, we must suspend judgment and avoid a definite conclusion.†

* The author may be allowed to refer to an article on "The Attitude of the Historical Student towards Miraculous Records," in *The Expository Times* of January, 1917.

† "In history it often happens that the best executed monographs furnish no other result than the proof that knowledge is impossible. It is necessary to resist the desire which leads some to round off with subjective, ambitious, and vague conclusions monographs which will not bear them. The proper conclusion of a good monograph is the balance-sheet of the results obtained by it and the points left doubtful."—MM. LANGLOIS AND SEIGNOBOS: *Introduction aux études historiques* (English translation), pp. 306 ff.

IV.—DOCUMENTS NOT NARRATIVE

THE principles of criticism laid down in the foregoing pages are valid with respect to all documents, but a few remarks should be added regarding their application to what are called "Records." These are not narrative, and their primary origin is legal. They are documents concerned with the ownership and transfer of property, with matters of law and rights, with the correspondence, home and foreign, of the great departments of State, etc. They include, roughly, enrolments intended to be authentic records of lawful acts made by the proper officer of any court on rolls or official entry books; memoranda of acts or instruments brought into the proper office of any court and preserved in rolls, bundles, or files; books of entries containing memoranda of acts, etc., entered by officers of the court; and State papers. The latter originally sprang from the Privy Council and Chancery, and are now divided into various branches, such as the correspondence and other records of the Privy Council, of the Secretaries of State, and of all other public departments.*

It is evident that these constitute some of the principal sources from which historical writers must

* See *Handbook to the Public Records*, by F. S. Thomas (1853); *Guide to Various Classes of Documents in the Public Record Office*, by S. R. Scargill Bird, third edition, 1918; also *The Public Record Office*, by C. Johnson, in this series.

derive their materials. Many are to be found in the Public Record Office, some are in the custody of local authorities, while others have come down to us from the private papers of the official to whom the letters, etc., were addressed. In dealing with them much less stress need be laid on the problems of identification and localization. These are usually settled by endorsements, marks of ownership, or other evident external or internal indications. Valuable information is also often to be obtained by a comparison with other documents bearing the same external marks. But sometimes the problem of genuineness arises. In this connection the pedigree of the document is very important, and a suspected origin gives rise to suspicion. When obtained from an official file and in the custody of their natural owner there is a strong presumption of authenticity; but to this there are exceptions. Tests of genuineness are arrived at by a comparison with other authentic documents of the same class and period. In this way a body of knowledge is built up by which any new document can be tested. Thus if a document professing to be a Merovingian charter does not exhibit the ordinary marks of such charters, it is spurious.

But though an official document may be proven a forgery its information may nevertheless be correct. Sometimes its very wording is genuine. This is exemplified by the many charters which were forged in order to comply with the English Chancery rule that originals must be produced by every applicant for renewal. For when the original had disappeared a

forged original was often prepared from a perfectly accurate transcript. Similarly, statements of laws may be substantially correct though only existing in codes claiming falsely to be original.

The object for which it was written is a very important point in connection with an official document. Every interested statement may possibly have an element of falsity, and where the author has an interest in deceiving he may knowingly seek to do so. Very frequently the author is in a position which itself impels him to violate truth. In drawing up a document he will conform to rule and custom even when the actual facts are to some extent in conflict with these. Then there are certain formulæ which need not bear any real relation to facts. Because a person signs himself "Your obedient servant" it does not follow that this is the exact relationship which exists between the correspondents. A baron is not necessarily the King's "trusty and well-beloved" though he is addressed as such. It would be wrong to conclude that ecclesiastical dignitaries of the Middle Ages were uniformly humble because when elected to an office they at first refused it, declaring themselves wholly unworthy, for as a matter of fact this refusal was a mere empty conventional form.

Again, the preamble of a statute may contain statements of fact, but they are not necessarily such. The account of the origin and history of the Star Chamber Court, given in the preamble to the Act abolishing it, is not to be accepted as conclusively authoritative.

Nor is even the wording of a statute necessarily

unassailable. The prolonged struggle between the spiritual and civil courts carried down to the fifteenth century gave rise to different versions of the same legal enactment. "The two versions of the great statute 'Circumspecte agatis,' the one saying to the Courts Christian jurisdiction in such actions" (*i.e.*, in suits "pro læsione fidei") "and the other denying it to them, are evidence of the zeal with which the contest was carried on; for the true text must almost certainly have been tampered with and falsified by the one party or the other in order to support its contention."*

With regard to medieval charters, there was a constant temptation to support claims or rights by producing some written warrant, and consequently all such documents require critical examination. Diplomatic correspondence found in State archives is most probably genuine, but it must not therefore be regarded as stating historical truth. Freeman characterizes it as "the chosen region of lies."† The fact that a person knows the truth does not involve the consequence that he will tell it; and diplomatic correspondence is the work of an advocate making the best case possible and sometimes attempting to deceive. Military despatches intended for immediate publication are frequently examples of *suppressio veri* and *suggestio falsi*. After the Beresina disaster Napoleon sent home a despatch announcing a crushing victory accompanied by great captures of prisoners

* *A Treatise on the Specific Performance of Contracts*, by Sir E. Fry (fifth edition, London, 1911), p. 12.

† *Methods of Historical Study*, p. 258.

and war material. But the lapse of time usually brings discovery of the truth.

In private papers, memoirs, etc., personal and family vanity is a frequent cause of the distortion of historical truth. Cicero tells us that the funeral panegyrics of distinguished men, and the family memoirs, had contributed to falsify the Roman annals and to fill them with unreal triumphs and honours.* The self-revelations of Henry VIII. or Napoleon *in his letters* are not to be taken as exact portrayals of fact.

Further examples might be cited, but from these it can be readily seen that in dealing with a record we must know the exact force of its terms, paying particular attention to "verbal formulæ"; the object for which it was written; the circumstances under which it was composed; the interests of its author; and make due allowance for the effects of all these upon the credibility of the writer.

* Brutus, c. 16.

V.—SYNTHESIS AND EXPOSITION

THE foregoing processes yield a series of isolated facts of varying probability and value. Such a series cannot be justly called history. These isolated facts must be placed in their native setting, and this is done by the instructed imagination of the historian. It is at this stage that error frequently creeps in. The historian did not see the facts he pictures and he cannot reconstruct them with perfect exactitude. Consequently he must be continually on his guard. The first image he projects is generally incorrect. He must modify it by eliminating all materials not drawn from his sources, thus basing his image only on the latter.*

Having imagined the facts, the historian groups them. He may do so by combining all the facts recorded as occurring in a certain period. Or he may set together all the facts which took place in a certain geographical district. Or, as has been frequently done in modern times, he may group together facts of the same kind, and so produce a history of law, or of religion, or of art.

From these latter syntheses of facts it has been sought to deduce the principles which may govern the

* The validity of this whole process depends on the assumption that the working of the human mind at the present time is substantially identical with its working throughout the historic past.

evolution of man in society, and such questions as the influence of environment, the purposive character of the whole evolution, the freedom of the human will, the reality of progress, etc., have furnished battle-grounds for historical workers in every country. But of all these questions it may be said with truth that "the end is not yet."

In face of the many problems which confront him the scientific historian will serve truth with a loyal and impartial zeal. His critical treatment of his authorities will be thorough and careful, without prejudice or passion, and the narrative of his results will reflect faithfully the nature and condition of his sources. In his efforts to accomplish these things every faculty of his mind will be exercised, and in his chosen sphere he will find abundant scope for all the talents he may possess.*

* The various questions raised with regard to the problems of synthesis and exposition are more fully dealt with in *The Logic of History*, by C. G. Crump, in this series.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. The various volumes in this series.
2. *Introduction aux études historiques*. Ch.-V. Langlois et Ch. Seignobos. Paris, 1908. (English translation by G. G. Berry, London, 1898.)
3. *Lehrbuch der historischen Methode und der Geschichtsphilosophie*. E. Bernheim. Leipzig, 1908.
4. *Historical Evidence*. H. B. George. Oxford, 1909.
- * 5. *The Methods of Historical Study*. E. A. Freeman. London, 1886.
6. *Lectures on the Method of Science*. Edited by T. B. Strong. Lecture IX., "Scientific Method as applied to History." Oxford, 1906.
7. *The Manufacture of Historical Material*. J. W. Jeudwine. London, 1916.
8. *An Enquiry into the Credibility of Early Roman History*. The Right Hon. Sir G. Cornewall Lewis. London, Clarendon Press, 1855. (In the same author's work, *The Methods of Observation and Reasoning in Politics* [London, 1852], a sketch of historical method, necessarily somewhat out of date, is contained in vol. i., chap. vii. It is based on P. C. F. Daunou's *Cours d'études historiques* [Paris, 1842-1849].)
9. *Livy*, Book I., with Introduction by J. R. Seeley. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1874. Deals with the application of method to the field of early Roman history.
10. Hort's *Introduction to the N.T.* (in the volume accompanying Westcott and Hort's edition of the Greek text of the N.T., 1881) sets forth succinctly the principles of textual criticism.

For further references see the bibliography contained in *Sources and Literature of English History*, by Ch. Gross, pp. 1 to 3 (London, 1915), and the numerous references in Bernheim's *Lehrbuch*.



168363

Marshall, Richard Lucas

The historical criticism of documents.

H M3697h

**University of Toronto
Library**

**DO NOT
REMOVE
THE
CARD
FROM
THIS
POCKET**

**Acme Library Card Pocket
LOWE-MARTIN CO. LIMITED**

